

THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

I. The localized tribal fighting that erupted in the eastern provinces when the pro-Soviet coup group seized power in late April 1978 has since grown into a countrywide insurgency. (S)

A. Faced with the hostility of the great majority of the traditionally independent population, the regime of President Taraki and Prime Minister Amin has no better than an even chance to complete its second year in power. (S)

B. Taraki and Amin will survive only as long as the loyalty of the military, the security service and the ruling party remains intact, under the heavy pressure being brought to bear by hostile forces. (S)

1. The most likely successor regime would be led by, or at least have the backing of leftist military officers. (S)
2. Coup plotters might seek Moscow's tacit approval to seize power would in any case retain strong ties with the Soviet Union. (S)

The Soviets favor the installation of a more broadly based government as a means of defusing the tribal insurgency. (S)

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11. Taraki and Amin have been the key figures in the regime since the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan seized power in April 1978. (S)
- A. However, Taraki, 62, is not in good health and there are signs he is playing a less active role than during the early days of the revolution. (S)
- B. Amin is de facto key decision-maker in the day-to-day affairs of the government. (S)
1. His status as the regime's ^{4-4 10-11} mover and shaker was confirmed 31 March when he was promoted from deputy prime minister to prime minister, a post Taraki had held since the revolution. (S)
- C. The regime's key policymaking body is the ruling party's seven-man Political Bureau. (S)
1. Taraki, Amin and Deputy Prime Minister Shah Wali make up the Political Bureau's Secretariat. (S)
- D. The top party leadership seems fairly well united as it faces the country's multiple domestic problems. (S)
1. There are some frictions but the key figures recognize they must submerge their differences at a time when their survival is threatened by a countrywide insurgency. (S)
1. The beleaguered Taraki regime's survival has come to depend increasingly, as the insurgency has spread, on Soviet political, military, economic and technical support. (There are between 1,500 and 2,000 Soviet advisers presently in Afghanistan.) (S)

- A. Afghanistan's nearly total dependence on Moscow has given the Soviets far more say in the Afghan Government's day-to-day decisionmaking process than they have ever had. (S)
1. Still, Taraki and Amin appear to be setting the main lines of policy. (S)
- B. The regime does not yet face a security situation that might prompt a request to Moscow for the direct intervention of Soviet forces. (S)
1. However, an appeal for Soviet combat units is conceivable within the next 12 months. (S)
- C. The Soviets will go to some lengths to protect their interests in Afghanistan but probably not to the extent of intervening militarily. (S) *at least*

1. The Soviets would be deterred by the prospects that their forces would be bogged down indefinitely trying to shore up a discredited regime. (S) *[traditionally, strong central govt. imposed by force when it breaks off tribes fight each other. Afghan govt. is weak & dependent on U.S.A.]*
2. Soviet leaders also have to weigh the regional--particularly with respect to Iran, Pakistan and India--and international political costs of direct intervention. (S)
3. However, if serious fighting broke out in areas near the Soviet border, Moscow might provide increased numbers of tactical aircraft, helicopters, ^{NT-243} ₍₁₇₎ pilots and advisers to assist Kabul. (S)

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- IV. The government is making no progress against the tribal insurgency, which continues to spread and erode military capabilities. (S)
- A. If morale in the military continues to decline it will affect the government's ability to hold Kabul and other key cities. (S)
 - B. Casualties and defections to the rebels have left the regime short of men in major commands throughout the country. (S)
 - C. In spite of continuing Soviet support, the Afghans face problems in maintaining equipment and supplying units in the field. (S)
- V. The tribal insurgents operate with impunity in over half of the country. They have overrun a few government positions in the east and interdicted main roads for a few hours but they have been unable to seize an important town. (S)
- A. They lack centralized leadership and strategic coordination needed to unify them into a cohesive force. (S)
 - B. Still, they should be able to maintain pressure against the regime for some time. (S)
 - 1. They have a long tradition of guerrilla warfare and can draw on large manpower reserves. (S)
 - 2. Simple logistic requirements enable them to live off the land and to equip themselves with arms captured from government forces. (S)